

Startup Seattle: An Initiative Supporting Seattle's Technology Startup Community

Seattle has significant assets that make this region a destination for technology companies. Globally recognized industry icons such as Microsoft and Amazon are headquartered in our community and have spun off hundreds of new businesses, Facebook and Google continue their expansion, the University of Washington churns out innovation and talent, our vibrant neighborhoods are magnets for technology firms, and Seattle's unmatched quality of life attracts talent from around the world.

However, competition for talent and ideas will continue to be fierce and global in scale. To remain competitive, the City of Seattle and the technology community will need to make investments that keep Seattle among the top global destinations for talented entrepreneurs.

Startup Seattle is the first step in a collaborative effort between the City of Seattle and leaders of Seattle's technology startup community to develop a strategy to support early-stage technology companies, expand the number of startups, and firmly establish Seattle as an internationally recognized home for emerging technology companies.

The Office of Economic Development's (OED) approach for industry sector development integrates individual business support, connection to resources and navigating the regulatory environment, infrastructure development and policy development. The initial design of Startup Seattle builds on our existing experience with sector development and includes best practices from other cities that are specifically targeting emerging technology companies.

The Startup Seattle program elements address major themes that came out of Mayor McGinn's initial technology startup roundtable in May 2012, subsequent Startup Seattle Advisory Group discussions on January 21 and 29, 2013, and one-on-one conversations with industry leaders. From those exchanges, a number of areas of focus emerged: general public sector support, marketing, expansion of the talent pool, livability, and incentives.

1. **Startup Seattle Business Services.** The City is uniquely suited to play several roles supporting the growth of Seattle's startup community:
 - **Startup Business Sector Liaison.** OED will establish a Startup Business Liaison position with responsibilities that include:
 - i. Re-launching and managing StartupSeattle.com
 - ii. Serving as a single point of contact for new entrepreneurs looking to get started
 - iii. Working with the Startup Seattle Advisory Group going forward to identify and execute short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives
 - **Coordinated Business Services.** The Liaison will manage StartupSeattle.com, which will be re-launched in partnership with early stage business development organizations such as HUB Seattle, SURF Incubator, TechSTARS, Geekwire and others to serve as the branded home page for the Startup Seattle initiative. This will also be the primary clearinghouse for information on business services, professional development, and networking events for the local technology startup community.
 - **Startup incentive package.** The Liaison will also be responsible for working with local community partners and industry leaders to develop an incentive program to encourage technology startups to stay in or relocate to Seattle by providing them with a suite of discounted or free business services if they meet certain predetermined criteria.
 - **Marketing and public relations plan.** The Liaison will also work with the Startup Seattle Advisory Group to develop and execute a marketing plan to promote Seattle as a destination for top talent and investment capital.

- 2. Expanding Opportunities in Technology.** Form new partnerships with Startup Weekend, Student RND, Code.org and other local companies to increase high school student access to experiences in the technology startup sector. This effort will organize student-specific events and explore other ways to connect technology leaders and students directly, with an explicit focus on targeting youth in Seattle's underserved communities.

The City will also continue to support the University of Washington in producing graduates in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields and similar efforts of the Seattle Public Schools.

- 3. Placemaking.** Fremont, South Lake Union, and Pioneer Square are already successful startup hubs, with a good mix of established companies, new companies, residences, and amenities. Community leadership and public policies have played an invaluable role in supporting their development, and we need to continue to support existing hubs such as these while also taking advantage of opportunities to create innovation centers in other neighborhoods.

The coming light rail station in the University District represents one such opportunity. As part of the University District Livability Partnership (UDLP), the City will conduct a market assessment of the University District neighborhood and University of Washington development sites focusing on the potential to support flexible low cost office space and other amenities that will make the neighborhood more attractive to early stage technology companies and to better integrate the technology sector with the University District and the University of Washington. The market assessment would also identify the needs of startup companies and reasons why emerging companies locate in specific Seattle neighborhoods.

- 4. Broadband Infrastructure.** Work with broadband developers to develop and operate a high-speed fiber-to-the-home/fiber-to-the-business broadband network. The plan will leverage the City's excess fiber capacity and begin with a demonstration project in fourteen Seattle neighborhoods and includes wireless technology to deploy services more quickly to other areas in the city. Expanding broadband infrastructure will help create an environment that will stimulate business opportunities.

Outcomes and Impact

OED will lead this initiative with a Startup Seattle Advisory Group. For 2013 and 2014, Startup Seattle will focus on the following:

- Hire a Startup Business Sector Liaison
- Re-launch the StartupSeattle.com website
- Work with We Make Seattle to produce a video highlighting local success stories
- Organize 2-3 events to connect high school students directly with local technology opportunities
- Facilitate Connections between Seattle Public Schools and Code.org
- Initiate University District market assessment
- Develop a marketing plan and identify partnerships and funding

The City and the Advisory Group will develop a set of performance metrics to track the impact of the Startup Seattle initiative. Among the potential metrics to be used, OED regularly tracks the annual rate of business startups and closures as a part of its economic indicators. This baseline data can be utilized to track growth in the rate of new businesses over time. In addition, we will have the capacity to track the number of businesses served by the Startup Liaison, web traffic on StartupSeattle.com and number of businesses participating in technology industry partnerships.